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Book Review

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By George Meyer, MD

EVIDENCE IN SERVICE: an evidence-based literature review of service and satisfaction in health care, by David Cornish, MD, and Dianne Dukette, PhD, RoseDog Books, Pittsburgh, PA, ISBN: 978-1-4349-9101-0, 192 pages, \$18.00 paperback.

Evidence-based medicine has been a household word in training programs for about 20 years. Many large organizations have been evaluating the interaction of patients and physicians with tools that have not met the same standards. Cornish and Dukette have reviewed the literature and have put together a very readable softbound book about this issue.

The book is organized into several subsections: Evidence-based Dressing (e.g., apparel), Communication, Managing Patient Satisfaction, Empathy, Ethnicity, Information for Patients, Trust, Gender and Miscellaneous. Each section addresses one or more articles and finishes with the authors' assessment of the value of the article.

We all have our prejudices about what we expect from our caregivers. The first section discusses such issues as formal versus less formal clothing, white coats, piercing, and tattoos in the caregivers.

The section on communication gives some good suggestions about keeping communication open with the patient. It cites the long known fact that the physician often lets the patient speak for 18 seconds before interrupting.

The authors suggest the initial part of the encounter should be used to make certain the patient has listed all the points to be discussed, then setting an agenda using the time allotted. For instance, when patients list their first complaint, the provider is encouraged to ask, "What else?" to ensure all patient issues are mentioned.

They stress the **ILS** approach to history taking (**I**nvite the patient to discuss the complaint; **L**isten avidly; and **S**ummarize the history so the patient knows you got it.)

There is also good information about communicating with patients across ethnic, gender, and limited education barriers. They also discuss the concept of teaching communication skills to improve interactions. Although the data do not support the cost, some large groups still offer these communication skills sessions.

I was interested in the section called, "What if a patient receives a copy of the consultant's letter to the primary care physician (PCP)?" I was expecting this to discuss the inadvertent missending of a letter to the patient. The study from the United Kingdom actually showed that 83 percent of patients who received a copy of the letter (intended for the patient as well as the PCP) thought it was a good idea and that they were getting better care.

Overall I like this book and recommend it for any caregiver who wants to understand the science of how to improve the way we communicate with our patients.

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